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Identity, Purpose, Belonging / Talent / John 14:15-31

Notes

See pg 121 in Who Am I Lord? God is talented, we are made in his image.

Pg. 135-136 (Gideon) in Who Am I Lord? Pg. 163-164 (simon/Peter)

Pg. 136 in Who Am I Lord (Joseph the least qualified)

Middle Child Syndrome

Take care of each other

We are not to play it safe, but to put it out there.

We are all saints

<https://aleteia.org/2018/05/02/8-saints-who-were-depressed-but-never-gave-up>

Take stock of your resources often, when can you give more?

Why do we search the outer space? In ahh of what God has created.

Talented animals

Rely on each other, cooperate with each other.

He may start with something you're good at (like Simon with fishing) and then to something more out of your comfort zone.

Become talented by being an apprentice (Jesus' disciples)

Learn under others (me working with Dad)

Jesus called all sorts of people to be his disciples....we all belong as part of the church community,

People told they wouldn't amount to much and went on to do big things.

June 21st, 2006 a stage with spotlights shining down, drops of sweat streaming down foreheads, sweaty palms and hearts racing as participants from all across the US and in fact the world came to Los Angeles on stage for their big break. They all believed they possessed some form of talent. Each participant or act would audition for a few minutes in front of a panel of judges, attempting to secure

a place in the live episodes. Participants who made it to the live episodes would compete against each other for vote to make it to the finals. The winner would receive a large cash prize and an opportunity to headline a show on the Las Vegas strip. While talent can be at the eye of the beholder, there is definitely a wide variety of talent that shows up. Biana Ryan, an 11 year old, was the first ever winner of America's Got Talent, after singing a rendition of And I Am Telling You I'm Not Going. While there is some talent that is questionable, often from someone looking to get their 5 minutes of fame, much of the show demonstrates the wide variety of abilities using an extraordinary range of skills. For instance, while I may not be one to enjoy Opera I do know the extraordinary talent one most possess when I hear it. I love watching America's Got Talent for the variety of talent that I get to see in one room. I enjoy when a comedian comes out and can make me laugh without having to use crude or insulting jokes. Or there are some incredible dance/acrobatic routines that blow me away. Many of these participants have incredible talent. When I look out at this room I see incredible talent, but you don't have to stand underneath the spotlight (unless of course you want to join me up here) to showcase your talent.

If I were to ask you what is at least one thing that you are talented at, and you don't have to say it out loud, what would you say? Is there a way to use that talent to glorify

God, serve others, and further His kingdom.

Knowing this week was based on talent I initially went to the passage on the Parables of the Talent, but felt an unease about it, until I believe God pointed me to the passage today found in John 14:15-31. Jesus has just shared the last supper with his disciples, and he has predicted Peter's denial. Jesus is giving his last speech to the 11 of the 12 disciples, as Judas Iscariot has left by this point. Many of the remaining disciples were fishermen. Matthew was a tax collector. For five of them it doesn't mention. To quote from my Bible, "These faithful disciples were ordinary men who became extraordinary because of Jesus Christ. Despite their confusion and lack of understanding during Jesus' lifetime, they became powerful witnesses to his resurrection. Simon Peter was impulsive but later bold in preaching about Jesus, James, son of Zebedee was ambitious; short-tempered, judgmental, and deeply committed to Jesus, John was ambitious; judgmental later and very loving, Andrew was eager to bring others to Jesus, Philip had a questioning attitude, Bartholomew was honest and straightforward, Matthew was a despised outcast because of his dishonest career, Thomas was courageous and known for his doubt, Simon the Zealot had fierce patriotism, and not much is said about James son of Alphaeus or Thaddaeus."

A wide variety of individuals, a mixed bag of sorts, but

Jesus unites them all, calling them his disciples. I wondered the reason that for a couple of the disciples if a lot is unknown is intentional so that we may see ourselves in them, the unknown. A fill in the blank sort of thing, as we are all called to be disciples of Jesus. But that is for another day.

Jesus was a rabbi, which literally means master. Rabbis were the spiritual masters of Israel. Not only were they expert teachers of the Torah (the Scripture of their day); they were also examples of life with God - those special few who shine with an inner luminescence. Every rabbi had his “yoke” - a Hebrew idiom for his set of teachings, his way of reading Scripture, his take on how to thrive as a human being in God’s good world. Your life and teaching were your credentials. Over and over again in the four Gospels, Jesus is addressed as “rabbi” but he was no ordinary rabbi. Everywhere he went, the crowds were “astonished” and “overwhelmed with wonder.” The biographer Luke wrote, “All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that come from his lips.” Mark said, “The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.”

I try to instill in my children an attitude of try, even when you may not think you’re good at it. A couple weekends ago we had a large rainfall on a Saturday. Mark was away in Ottawa, so it was just the kids and I home. Something told

me to look in the basement as the last major rainfall this past summer we had a significant flood in our basement of which our sub pump couldn't keep up and had damage done to the basement. So, when I opened the basement door that Saturday I noticed a small bit of water at the bottom of the basement stairs...not a good sign. I grabbed my rain boots, walked down backwards down the steep stairs to get into the basement and noticed the sub pump wasn't working. Hmm.....I called dad. I didn't want him to travel into town since it was his day off and I knew work was keeping him really busy throughout the weeks so he was exhausted on the weekends, but I needed his advice. We talked through the fact that the sub pump was probably toast from all the work this past summer, so I was heading to town for a new pump and Dad would get himself ready to head into town. I had seen dad replace one before. As soon as I got home I undid the box, got everything ready, unhooked what needed to be unhooked, reattached what needed to be reattached and plug in the sub pump....voila...the sound of success....it worked....and then it didn't.....hmmm.....I checked out the sub pump I just took out and realized there was a little piece it had on it that wasn't on the new one, don't ask me what it's called. I found it in the bottom of the box, put it on the new pump and it started working. I called Dad in excitement....."You don't have to come, I got it." At which point, Mackenzie, who was upstairs sick, lying on the couch in the living came

to the top of the basement stairs, startled me, yelling, “Good job mom!” I would definitely not add handy person to my talent list, but from watching my dad I’ve been able to start to figure things out and gain confidence in my skills of how certain things work. But as I tell many of you during coffee club, gardening is still not on that list of can do... I’ll keep working on it as I joke with some of you who are great gardeners that I’m going to need you to teach me.

I may not be so good that I can use my fix it skills outside of my own home, but by watching Dad I’ve been able to learn things along the way. I have also learned over the years, that when God asks me to do something, even if I don’t think I’m that talented at it, he makes a way so that I learn what I need to learn and he puts the right people in my path to support me.

You see the disciples had spent a lot of time with Jesus during his earthly ministry. Once a person was chosen to apprentice under a rabbi their entire life was organized around three driving goals:

1. To be with their rabbi
2. To become like their rabbi
3. To do as their rabbi did

The whole point of apprenticeship was to train under a rabbi in order to one day become a rabbi yourself. If you

made it through the gauntlet of discipleship (and that was a real if), then when the rabbi thought you were ready, your rabbi would turn to you and say something like “Okay kid, I give you my blessing, Go and make disciples.”

This is what it meant to be a disciple and this is still what it means to be a disciple.

1. Be with Jesus
2. Become like him.
3. Do as he did.

He didn't invite people to convert to Christianity. He didn't even call people to become Christians; he invited people to apprentice under him into a whole new way of living. To be transformed. Transformation is possible if we are willing to arrange our lives around the practices, rhythms, and truths that Jesus himself did, which will open our lives to God's power to change. We can be transformed if we are willing to apprentice ourselves to Jesus.

In the passage for today Jesus is promising his disciples and anyone who loves him and obeys his teaching that they will have the Holy Spirit living within them forever.

Paul writes in Galatians 3 “The only thing I want to learn from you is this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard?” he then continues further in the chapter, Galatians 3:26–29 “for in

Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise."

We are all children of God, and so in our love for Jesus we have the Holy Spirit living within us. The Holy Spirit, the very presence of God within us, helping us live as God wants and building Christ's church on earth. By faith, we can have access to the Spirit's power each day, living and learning as the disciples did with Jesus, their rabbi, the master teacher, the son of God.

Sometimes we might think we're not talented enough, but God shows us that if it is His will, He will make it happen through His providence. Throughout salvation history, we find God raising up those, by any external standard, who seem instead to be particularly unqualified. For example in Judges 7, after Gideon has raised an army of some 32 000 men to fight the Midianites. God stop him and prevents him from proceeding into battle ---not because Gideon's army is too small, but because it is too large. God is saying it would be far too easy to omit God's providence from the picture and for the men to glory in their own natural gifts and talents. Humility can be hard to accept. Some people use

their talents and want all the honour, but God asks us to use our talents giving glory to the one who remains with us. Sometimes one will get noticed and other times one may be hidden in the background, but God notices.

As verse 25 and 26 say, (John 14:25–26 ““I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.””). The Holy Spirit is the very power of God in us working for and with us. We always have the teacher with us. Just like I learned so much watching my dad growing up, fixing things around the house that I have come to be able to fix things myself, God asks us to pay attention. As Jesus’ disciples we are to be with him, become like him, and do as he did. Jesus promised the disciples that the Holy Spirit would help them remember what he had been teaching them and we have this promise today too. 1 Corinthians 12:4–6 states “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.”

As this passage and the parable of talents eludes to, it’s not the talent you have, or how much of it you have, but the fact that you do something with it instead of hiding it, we all have access to the Holy Spirit.

“When the day of Pentecost had come,” as it reads in Acts

2:1-8 they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?” A moment that could only be explained by the Holy Spirit filling each of them. The Holy Spirit has made me realize the talent God has gifted me, even when I don’t feel so talented. When I give God my fears and let Him be my strength throughout those times when I don’t feel as talented as he’s asking me to be, I often don’t recognize myself as I do things I never thought I would be able to do, because I’m not alone.

You see, at the age of 16 when I was asked to play for a church, I agreed, because well, I had played the piano since the age of 7, so I felt somewhat confident in my skills, even though I still get nervous sometimes when I play. And I’ve continued that to this day, makes sense. So for God to ask

me to use my musical abilities in church to further God's kingdom, I was definitely on board. But you see things become very different when all of a sudden God asked me to do something I didn't think I was quite so good at, something I didn't think I was as talented or confident in my abilities. But again, I have come to realize, through the Holy Spirit living in me, that when God asks, if you let him, he will make the way, nervous or not, whether you fully believe in yourself or not.

So, what is your talent Billtown? Are you hospitable, artistic, technology minded, musical, a can fix it attitude, patient teacher with children, public speaker, and the list goes on. Jesus calls you by name, you are His, a child of the God Most High, isn't that incredible?! The God who formed this spectacular universe with its variety of creation. He made you as part of it all. His spirit lives within you, so how are you going to reveal Christ to others through your talents? Maybe something you didn't think you were really that good at? Don't ever forget that God lives within you and calls you His own. The teacher is always there, and Scripture reminds us of all that he has said to us. And you never know when someone is watching and sees Jesus in You. 1 Peter 4:10 reminds us, "Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received."

If we were to host a Billtown's Got Talent, what would you

sign up for to further the kingdom of God and serve one another? They say talent is in the eye of the beholder, thankfully, God is our beholder.